

Kepuh Tree (polychrome)  
Drawing by Ida Bagus Anom, Padang Tegal

## PAMURTIAN IN BALINESE ART

C. Hooykaas

Either in Java or in Bali, through which she travelled extensively and intensively, the late Claire Holt, whom we honor in this volume, would have come across the peculiar type of *wajang* figure known as *brahala* in Java and in Bali as *pamurtian*. This type of figure is aptly described and placed in its appropriate context in the following passage from Colin McPhee's article "The Balinese Wayang Kulit and Its Music":<sup>1</sup>

The following rites must be observed in their fixed order before the play is ready to unfold.

1. A small offering containing flowers and money (*chanang burat wangi*, with 35 Chinese cash) is placed on the cover of the unopened *kropak* [chest for flat leather puppets]; two sticks of incense are lighted and held in the hand while the *dalang* prays to the divinity patronizing the performance.

2. The *dalang* recites to himself the various magic formulas to ensure his success with the audience. Up to this point the musicians are free to play what music they choose other than that used in the play.

3. The *dalang* then strikes the cover of the *kropak* three times with the palm of his hand (*nyebahkropak*). At this point the musicians commence the long prelude, the *Pemungkah*, while the *dalang* opens the box and places the cover to his right.

4. He then takes out the following figures in their set order, inserting them to the right or to the left in the *gedebong* [banana trunk], according to their significance.

a. The greater *pemurtian* (a many headed figure representing a transcendental state of anger which a benevolent god may assume) is placed to the right.

b. The lesser *pemurtian* (with fewer heads, assumed by malevolent gods, demons, etc.) is placed to the left.

c. The *kepuh* tree is placed to the left. . . .  
(Note: *Eriodendron anfractuosum*, a large tree sacred to the goddess Durga. Nearly every graveyard possesses one, and it is taboo to cut them down. In the *wayang* it is depicted filled with demons and evil birds and festooned with entrails. At the roots are bones and skulls. Scenically it establishes the graveyard or unholy ground, the haunts of demons and the goddess of death.)

Since McPhee's main concern was with music, the illustrations to his article were exclusively devoted to musicians and *wajang* theater in general, and the *pamurtian* and *kepuh* tree went

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1. In *Djawa*, 16, no. 1 (1936), pp. 1-34.



Lesser Pamurtian  
Drawing by Ida Bagus Anom, Padang Tegal





Greater Pamurtian  
Drawing by Ida Bagus Anom, Padang Tegal

unrepresented. But at the time he was writing (1936) a sample pamurtian puppet was already available in T. J. Bezemer's *Indonesische Kunstnijverheid*<sup>2</sup> and a drawing of two pamurtian had been published in *Djawa*,<sup>3</sup> though no corresponding representation of the kepuh tree as yet existed. When McPhee's article was reprinted in 1970,<sup>4</sup> additional references could have been inserted, namely, to a Delft catalogue<sup>5</sup> for a superb photograph of a wajang pamurtian, and to a paper by Dr. Th. P. Galestin<sup>6</sup> for a picture of a cloth painting in which a pamurtian is the dominant figure. The kepuh tree, however, remained unillustrated.

For those readers who may not have had access to the illustrations mentioned above, the accompanying drawings by Ida Bagus Anom of Padang Tegal, Ubud, may be the clearest introduction to the visual shape of these figures. Leaving aside the polychrome picture of the kepuh tree, I would like to point out some specific features of the two pamurtian, the lesser of which has four heads, while the greater has seven. The greater pamurtian has ten arms in all, nine of which are holding *señjata* (weapons), while one is characterized only by a long, sharp thumbnail. The most obvious explanation of the former is that they present the weapons of the *nawa-sanga*, the "nine-nine," i.e. the four main directions, the four between them, and the center, well known from Balinese iconography<sup>7</sup> and ritual.<sup>8</sup> In this case, the meaning of the lesser pamurtian would be protection for the dalang and his helpers, the performance, and the public, from all imaginable danger threatening from the four main directions, while the greater pamurtian would guarantee still more perfect protection by covering the directions in between. It may be recalled that the supreme *bhūta-yajña* offering

2. T. J. Bezemer, Indonesische Kunstnijverheid: platen-atlas met inleiding (Amsterdam and The Hague: Maandblad "Nederlandsche-Indië, Oud en Nieuw," 1931?).
3. R. Ng. Poerbatjaraka and C. Hooykaas (trans.), Mpu Sedah and Mpu Panuluh, "Bhārata-Yuddha," in *Djawa*, 14 (1934), photo opposite p. VIIId.
4. Jane Belo (ed.), Traditional Balinese Culture (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970).
5. Ethnografisch Museum, Delft, Indonesische kunst uit eigen bezit: tentoonstelling gehouden naar aanleiding van het honderdjarig bestaan van de "Indische Verzameling," sinds 1914, "Ethnografisch Museum," 1864-1964 (Delft: 1964), catalogue no. 100, photo 14.
6. Th. P. Galestin, "Enige Balische illustraties bij het Oudjava-ansche gedicht Smaradahana," Cultureel Indië, V (1943), pp. 76-87.
7. B. M. Goslings, "Een Nawa-sanga van Lombok," and H. T. Damsté, "Balische kleedjes en doeken, verband houdende met Eeredienst en Doodenzorg," in Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Gedenkschrift uitgegeven ter gelegenheid van het 75-jarig bestaan op 4 Juni 1926 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1926).
8. C. Hooykaas, Agama Tirtha: Five Studies in Hindu-Balinese Religion (Amsterdam: N. V. Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1964); C. Hooykaas, Surya-Sevana: The Way to God of a Balinese Siva Priest (Amsterdam: N. V. Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1966);

for (= against) the demons further includes nadir and zenith, and thus is called Eka-daśa-Rudra, the Elevenfold Horrifying One.<sup>9</sup> A ceremony for warding off evil spirits going by this same name requires so much preparation and expense that reputedly it can only be performed once in a century. The last time it was held was in 1963, when it coincided with a major eruption of the Gunung Agung, the Great Mountain, on the slope of which the rite took place.

Ida Bagus Anom's contemporary drawings are distinguished from my equally contemporary puppets mainly by their more slanting posture and by their outstandingly articulated arms and weapons. For the first feature I have no other explanation than the artist's whim. For the latter, one can only point to the fact that the draughtsman's product is purely for decoration. The dalang uses pamurtian in performing battle scenes, and though leather is a tough material, he can not run the risk of ruining his puppets at each performance and therefore gives them a simpler form less vulnerable to damage.

The pamurtian puppets in the collection of Ir. Beltman at The Hague, or those of the Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde in Rotterdam (none of which are dated) are all slightly slanting and all carved *en face*. However, a puppet carved *en profil* is preserved in Munich.<sup>10</sup> Though the catalogue description does not mention its place of origin, from its style I do not hesitate to ascribe it to Bali.

Comparable demoniac figures called brahala are known from East Java, from Jogjakarta, and even from a little further west in Pekalongan. To the best of my knowledge, however, these brahala have not attracted special attention from writers concerned with the Javanese shadow play.<sup>11</sup>

It is not only in the wajang theater that pamurtian appear, however. They are also a frequent, perhaps even beloved, subject for polychrome paintings on cotton. Thanks to the help of Gusti Mayun of the Bali Museum in Denpasar, Mrs. Hinzer of the Kern Institute in Leiden, Mrs. Terwen of the Museum for Ethnography in

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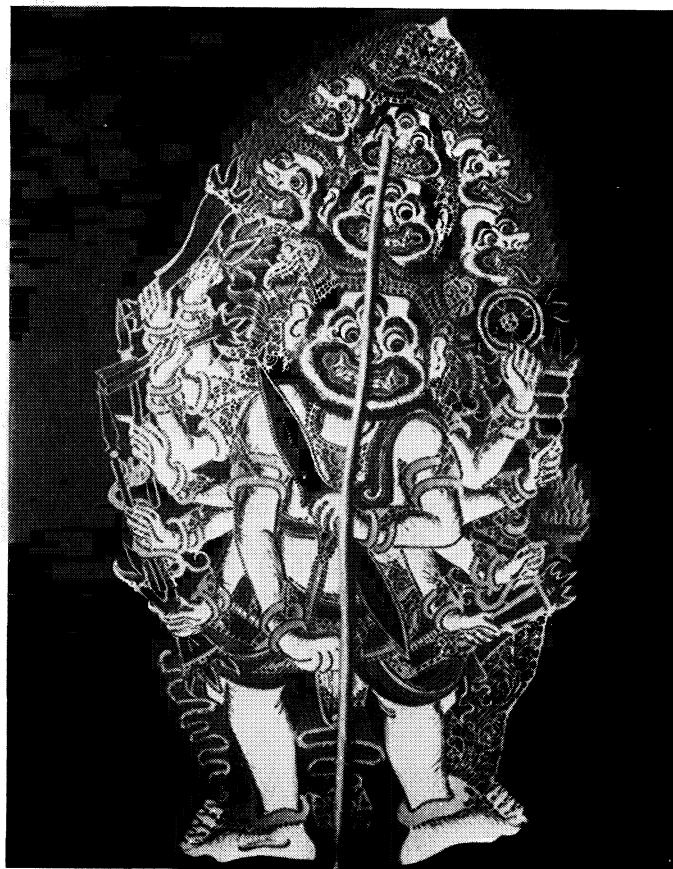
and C. Hooykaas and T. Goudriaan, Stuti and Stava (Amsterdam: N. V. Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1970).

9. The second part of my Balinese Baudha Brahmans, which will be published in 1972, deals with the 1963 ritual.
10. Puppentheater Sammlung der Stadt München, I. N. 43814. The puppet's height is 68 cm.
11. J. Kats, Het Javaansche tooneel: I. Wajang poerwa (Weltevreden: Commissie voor de Volkslectuur, 1923); James R. Brandon, Theatre in Southeast Asia (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967); James R. Brandon, On Thrones of Gold: Three Javanese Shadow Plays (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970); H. Ulbricht, Wayang Purwa: Shadows of the Past (Kuala Lumpur and Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1970).

Lesser Pamurtian, South Bali  
(private collection)



Greater Pamurtian, South Bali  
(private collection)

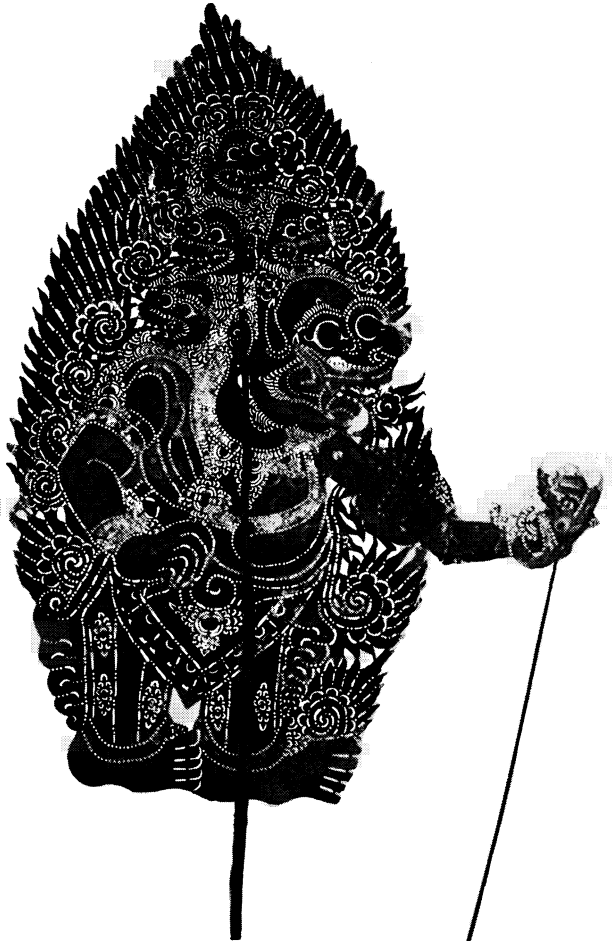




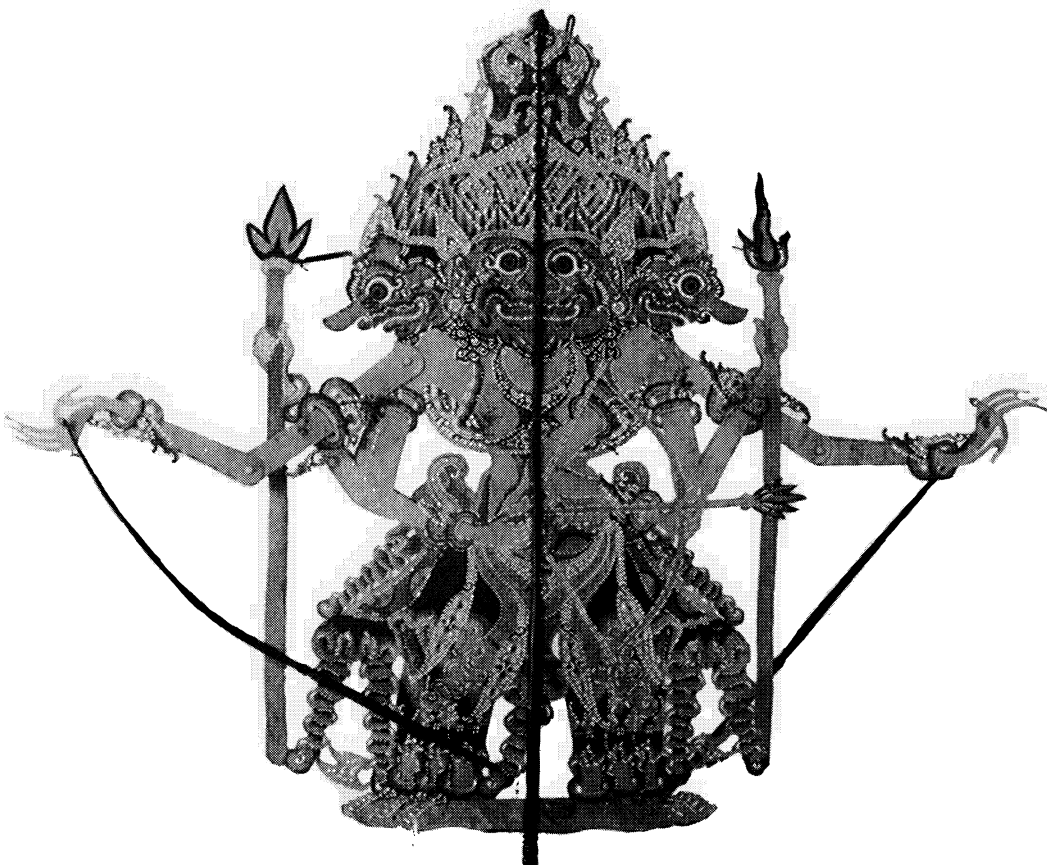


Lesser Pamurtian (Beltman Collection, 2806)



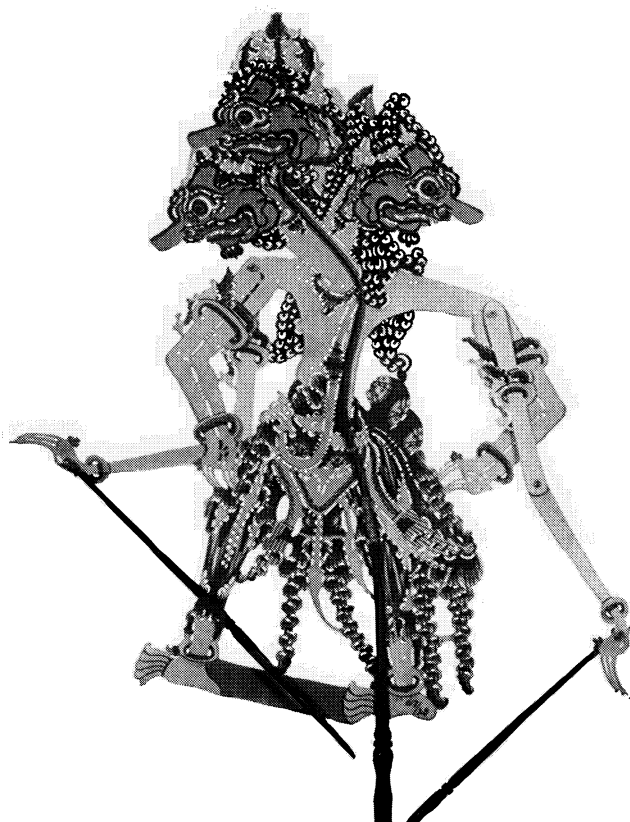
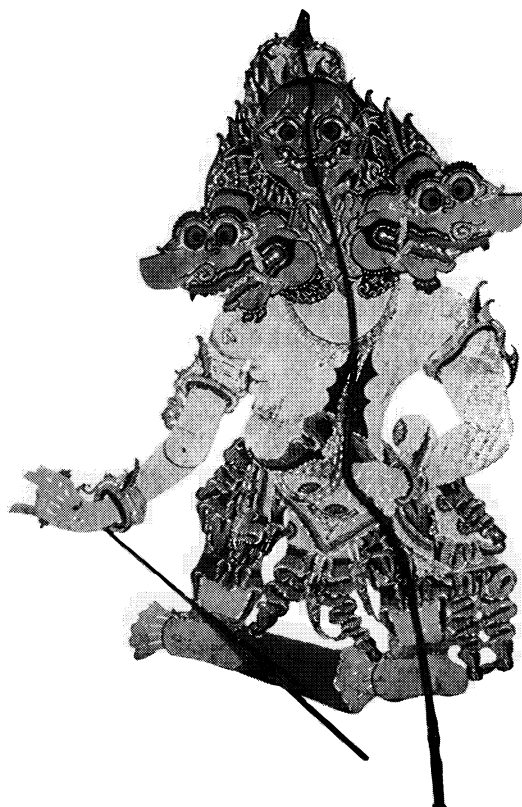


Greater Pamurtian  
(Puppentheater, Munich)



Brahala, Jogjakarta  
(Leiden Museum, 2092/1)

Brahala, East Java  
(Leiden Museum, 1617/13)



Brahala, East Java  
(Leiden Museum, 1617/2)

Leiden, and Mrs. Veldhuisen of the Rotterdam Museum, I am in a position to offer some photographs of scenes from such paintings, some of which are recognizable in Old Javanese literature, and others which could not yet be identified.

A. This fragment is dominated by a Śiwa pamurtian. To his right are shown the god of love, Kāma or Smara, being consumed by the fire of Siwa's wrath, and Ratih, the goddess of love. As described in the court poem *Smara-Dahana* (The Burning of the God of Love),<sup>12</sup> the situation is that Kāma is being punished for having dared to shoot one of his love-inspiring arrows at Siwa. Henceforth, mankind will be the target of the immaterial arrows of the immaterial god of love. The fragment here forms part of an *ider-ider*, a piece of cotton a few inches high but twenty or more feet in length, fastened round a bedstead. (This photograph, 556 L g b, Museum for Ethnography, Leiden, was taken from an original in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna.)



A. Siwa Pamurtian in Poem *Smara-Dahana*  
(Fragment of *ider-ider*, Leiden Museum)

12. R. Ng. Poerbatjaraka, *Smaradahana: Oud-Javaansche tekst met vertaling uitgegeven* (Bandung: A. C. Nix, 1931).

## SMARA-DAHANA VIII 7-10

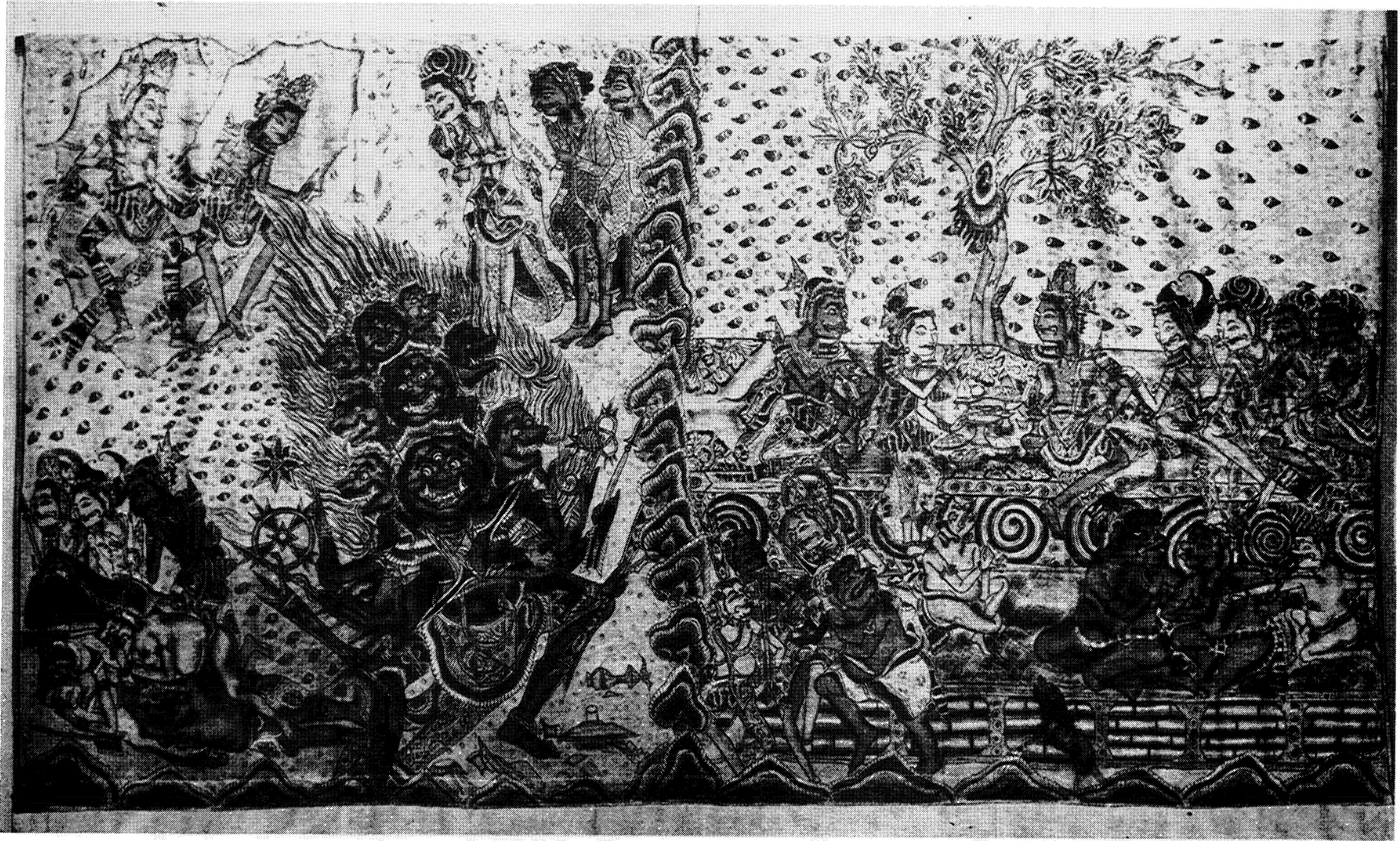
7. Rose up then Śiwa, the Supreme God, enraged; Huge  
became his form.  
Forthwith, of His own will, He took the frightful  
Three Strides shape.  
Terrible and dreadful, He placed Himself in the  
middle of the sky.  
The demons of demons and hideous beings gazed on  
Him terrified, horror-struck.
8. His form was that of Rudra, with five heads, immense,  
Horrible His hair unkempt, thick and glowing,  
Curling, red, like clouds at the doom of the Universe,  
His thousand arms, inspiring fear, He stretched in all  
directions.
9. His eyes, like suns and moons, formed half a circle;  
His nostrils, flared and deep, resembled caverns;  
His mouth, tusks razor keen, was like [the entrance  
to the Realm of] Death;  
His teeth, grinding, begat unceasing storms and  
thunderclaps.
10. He was as a mountain flanked with arms and legs;  
The long hairs on His body, drooping, made it seem  
like twilight;  
Each placing of a foot on Earth an earthquake  
caused;  
Earth rocked beneath His steps, as though it  
would be cloven.

B. This picture (No. 186 in the collection of the Bali Museum, 131 x 70 cm., polychrome on white cotton, originating from Batuan, Gianjar) consists of two halves and illustrates an episode from the beginning of the court poem *Bhārata-Yuddha*, the war of the Bhārata, an event which forms the kernel of the Sanskrit epic *Mahā-Bhārata*.<sup>13</sup> Kṛṣṇa, sent as an envoy by the Pāṇḍava to the court of the Kaurava, is treacherously set upon during a welcoming banquet. Enraged, he assumes a demonic form and puts the Kaurava to flight. On the right we see Kṛṣṇa received and regaled at a banquet by Duryodhana. Top left to right: Duryodhana, [?], Kṛṣṇa, Yuyutsu (?), Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa. Bottom left to right: Saṅkuni, Dursāsana, Karṇa, Dèlem, Saṅgut, Twalèn, Merdah, Baru (a priest's servant). On the left we find the terrified Kaurava fleeing before Kṛṣṇa in his demonic Tri-wikrama form, while above two gods and three heavenly seers are depicted. Since the text of the *Bhārata-Yuddha* (VII/2) tells us that the (Five) Seers had a divine appearance, there can be little doubt that it is they who are represented here.

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13. Cf. note 3.





B. Kṛṣṇa Pamurtian in Poem *Bhārata-Yuddha*  
 (Polychrome painting on cotton, Bali Museum)

## BHĀRATA-YUDDHA VIII 1-3

1. Thereupon King Kṛṣṇa, raging, stormed from the audience hall;  
And in the open space before the court took the godly shape of Death the Destroyer,  
Displaying His true nature as an incarnation of the God Wiśnu,  
As if it were a caprice, He took the shape in which He strode the Threefold World with His Three Strides.
2. Four were His arms, three His heads, each with three eyes.  
He was all the high Gods embodied,  
The brahmārṣi, the hosts of the Gods, giants, yakṣa and titans,  
Demons, satyrs, spirits and men with supernatural power.
3. Then with huge steps He strode, like a lion roaring.  
The earth quaked, everything swung to and fro.  
Holy mountains trembled; as they shook their summits rocked.  
The ocean's waters seethed, tortoises hurled about as is a discus.

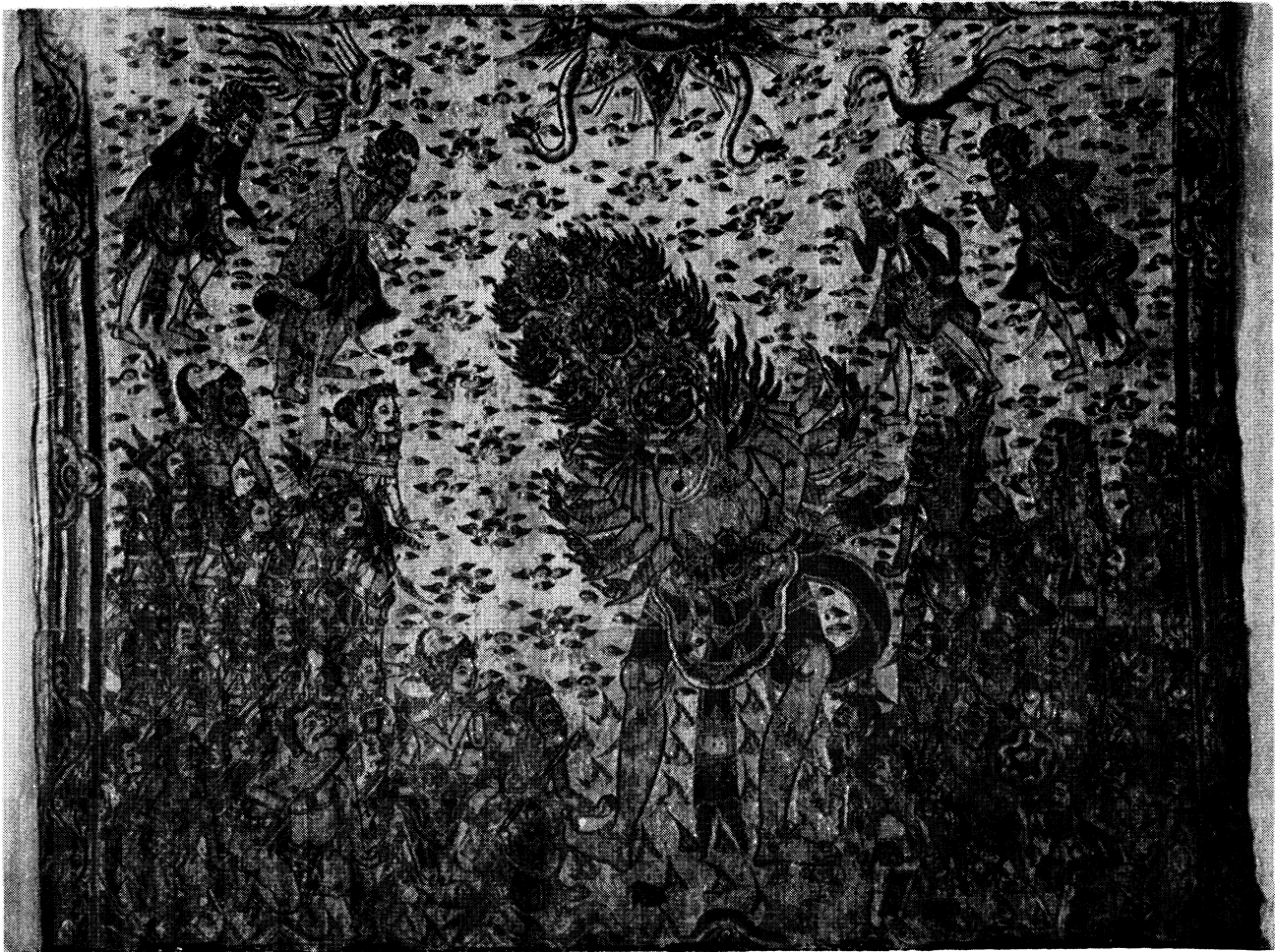
C. This picture (No. 556 from the collection of the Bali Museum, 181 x 140 cm., polychrome on factory-woven cotton, originating from Klungkung) illustrates a scene from the end of the court poem *Hari-Waṅśa*<sup>14</sup> in which Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, after their fight, become one. On the left are the Pāṇḍawa and their companions Setyaki, Yadu, and Wṛṣṇi. To the left are shown the Kaurawa, and the Chedi and their companions (who should have been placed on the left side since when they waged war they were at the side of the Pāṇḍawa). Above, heavenly seers, birds and a rainbow can be seen.

## HARI-WAṆŚA 40 9-11, 41, 42 1-4

9. King Kṛṣṇa was taken by surprise. He intended to shoot again, but he was too late, for as he fitted his arrow, he was struck again.  
His arrow slipped from his hands, so did the bow; they had failed him, they were useless.  
They [Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa] then began to punch each other, to strike each other with clubs; in the end they wrestled with each other, each holding the other tightly.  
Clenched, each tried to lock the other in his arms, or to throw him to the ground and master him.

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14. A. Teeuw, *Hariwaṅśa*, Vol. I: Tekst en Critisch Apparaat; Vol. II: Vertaling en Aantekeningen (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1950).



C. Pamurtian of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa in Poem *Hari-Waṅśa*  
(Polychrome painting on cotton, Bali Museum)

10. Then, proud of their noble warrior's spirit, both showed  
their power in many ways.  
They knew they were of divine origin, part of Nārāyaṇa.  
Forthwith each changed his form, and lo, their divine  
appearance could be seen.  
Their four hands were shining, lovely were their [*iris*]  
and the glances of their eyes.
11. But these gods who faced each other to wage single combat  
with daggers were of one essence.  
They fought as if they were two; two separate figures of  
Wiṣṇu, striving after difference because of the  
omnipotence of gods.  
But fighting could serve no purpose, and thus it was that  
an avatar of Wiṣṇu appeared,  
Serene, seated on a great lotus cushion, and the host of  
heavenly seers and the world guardians came to make  
obeisance.

1. When it was seen that the God Wiṣṇu had descended to Earth,  
The sun set and a lustrous moon arose,  
Casting its rays over the confusion on the battlefield,  
so that it ceased to be so frightful.  
The ten regions were dazzled with the radiance of jewels.
2. King Yudhiṣṭhira, filled with deep reverence, arrived to  
pay homage.  
He placed himself before Wiṣṇu, at a short distance from  
Him.  
He muttered mantra, also the essential mantra<sup>15</sup> in the  
right form, as taught in the manuals.  
Let his hymn of praise be spoken, let it be heard, clear  
and lovely.
1. "Oh God, Killer of Madhu, I beg thee to pay attention and  
look upon my gesture of reverence.  
God of Gods, irreproachable, essence of the unthinkable,  
Thou art the Highest Truth, difficult to grasp.  
Though immaterial, at once Thou makest Thy appearance  
to practise asceticism, according to the manuals.  
Thou art the Great Illusion; invisible in the deepest  
silence, Thou givest the greatest boons as  
recompense.
2. The inflexibility of the Cadu-śakti and mastery over  
the eight qualities make Thee inaccessible.  
It is difficult to assess all Thy embodiments; Thou  
art everywhere, Thou dost fill the Three Worlds.  
Brahmā, Wiṣṇu, Mahéśwara--how can they differ from  
Thee? For Thou art the Sole Original One.  
By the number of Thy virtues and actions Thou dost  
divide Thyself over the seven oceans.
3. As to creation, Thou wert there when Thou didst make  
the world, therefore Thou art the Original  
Father.  
As to the maintenance of the Three Worlds, they sought  
refuge with Thee, and thus Thou art Janārdana.  
At the catastrophe, at the destruction of the Universe,  
as Rudra Thou shalt consume the worlds.  
According to Thy pleasure Thou dost embody Thyself in  
different forms; Thou art the Highest Reality,  
the same as Sadā-Siwa.
4. The communities of religious mendicants, those who  
obtain their Holy Water from padanda Śiwa, padanda  
Buddha or from non-brahmans, having been given  
permission--all of them took a vow of asceticism.  
It is true that their religious books are different  
and that at their meetings they criticize the  
other communities.  
But they know that Thou art their cause, their origin  
and their destination and that there is none  
other.  
Thus it is true that with all its sects, the whole  
world expects its deliverance from Thee."

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15. Cf. Hooykaas, Surya-Sevana.





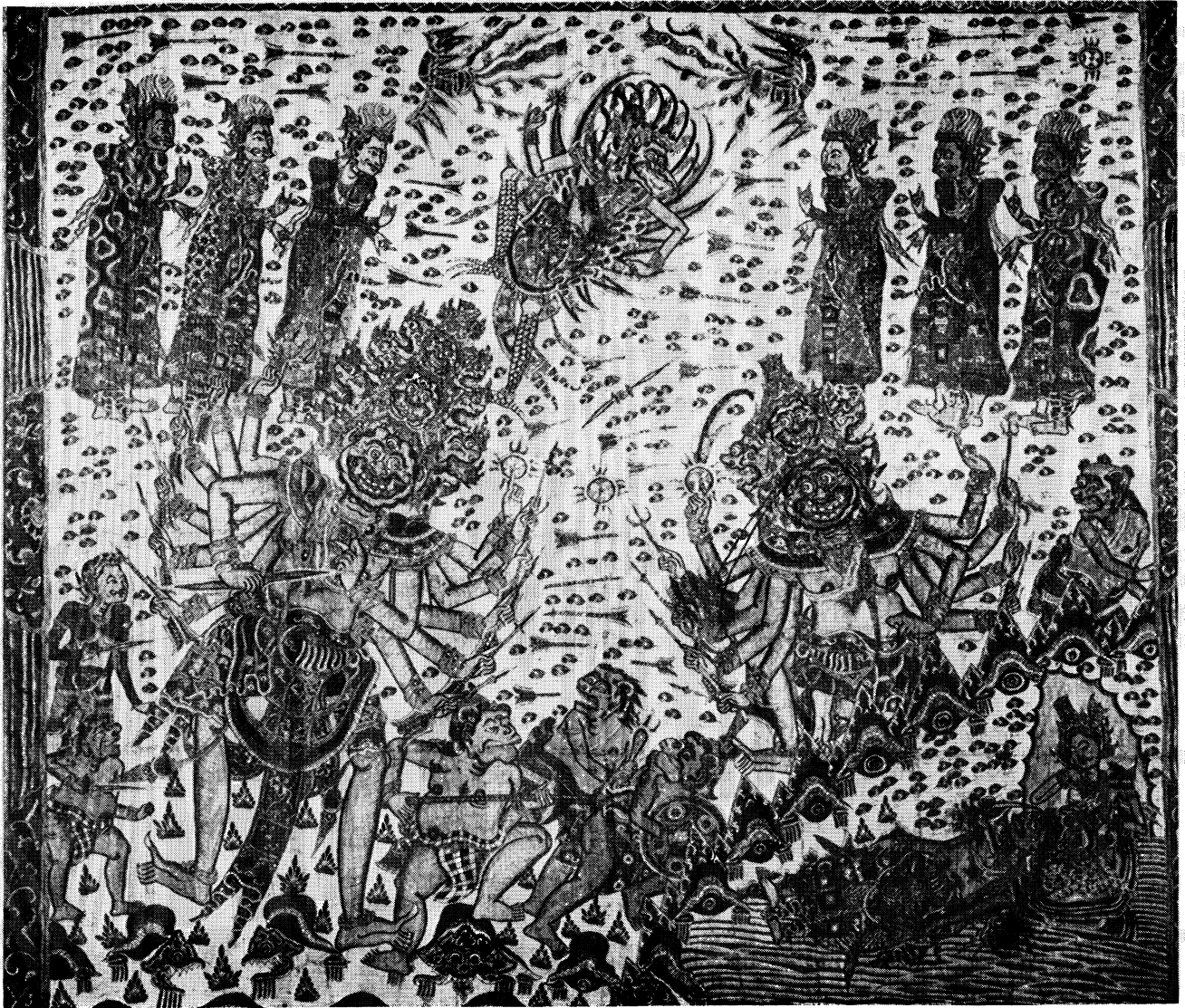
D. Bhoma Conquered by Pamurtian Wiṣṇu  
(Polychrome painting on cotton, Bali Museum)

D. This painting (No. 7 in the collection of the Bali Museum, 185 x 129 cm., polychrome on factory-woven cotton, originating from Klungkung) depicts the decisive battle which forms the close of the court poem *Bhoma-Kāwya*.<sup>16</sup> As long as Bhoma keeps possession of the magical flower *Wijaya-mālā*, given to him by his mother *Bhūmi*, he remains invulnerable in combat with *Kṛṣṇa*. But in the midst of battle *Viṣṇu*'s vehicle, the bird *Garuda*, seizes the flower and flies away with it (top right). Now *Bhoma*'s fierce resistance is of no avail and he is slain by *Kṛṣṇa*'s *pamurtian* (here shown treading on two *rākṣasa*). The heavenly seer *Nārada* or *Wrehaspati*, not mentioned in the text, can be seen at the top left, while at the bottom left *Bhoma*'s mother *Prethivī/Bhūmi* is shown weeping for her son's defeat and death.

#### BHOMA-KĀWYA CVI 4-9

4. Then, spurred by pity, King *Kṛṣṇa* brought his thoughts to one point.  
He took the form of the Three Strides and became the terrifying aspect of *Wisnu* in the material world.  
Full length He raised Himself as high as Supreme *Satya-Loka*.  
His breast, spread huge, filled the World of the Gods in the sky.
5. His heads, a thousand of them, each one had three flaming eyes.  
Their teeth stuck out unevenly; the mouths, they looked like gaping chasms.  
Each of His hands, numerous, as many as seven thousand, wielded supernatural weapons.  
His two feet, like a double *Mēru*, overspread the earth and covered it.
6. Monsters of the Three Worlds dangled from His hair, as black as ants were they.  
On one hair sometimes there were two, but sometimes there were three.  
They had their weapons, they were bones and knives . . . and choppers.  
They were smeared with gore, horrible to behold; their crowns were made of guts and lungs.
7. His thousand crowns a radiance shed as of a thousand suns in one.  
The jewels of His two thousand earrings sparkled with a splendid beauty.  
His four thousand teeth and weapons glowed like blazing fires.  
This caused the battlefield to be seen again and the warriors too.
8. The army of demons and giants died in their thousands, trodden underfoot.  
Elephants and their riders died in their hundreds of thousands, crushed and squashed to pulp.  
The demons in the sky fell back, by *Viṣṇu*'s body overthrown; they fled, disordered, each dragging each along,  
Their hair on end when monsters seized and struck them, screaming when by club or discus hit.

9. Just as Wiṣṇu took His Three Stride shape His weapons were revealed,  
Nandaka and Pañcayanya, and with them was His mace;  
Immediately Garuda came, his size the equal of the God's.  
Then people in their thousands, seeking merit, made  
obeisance to the God.



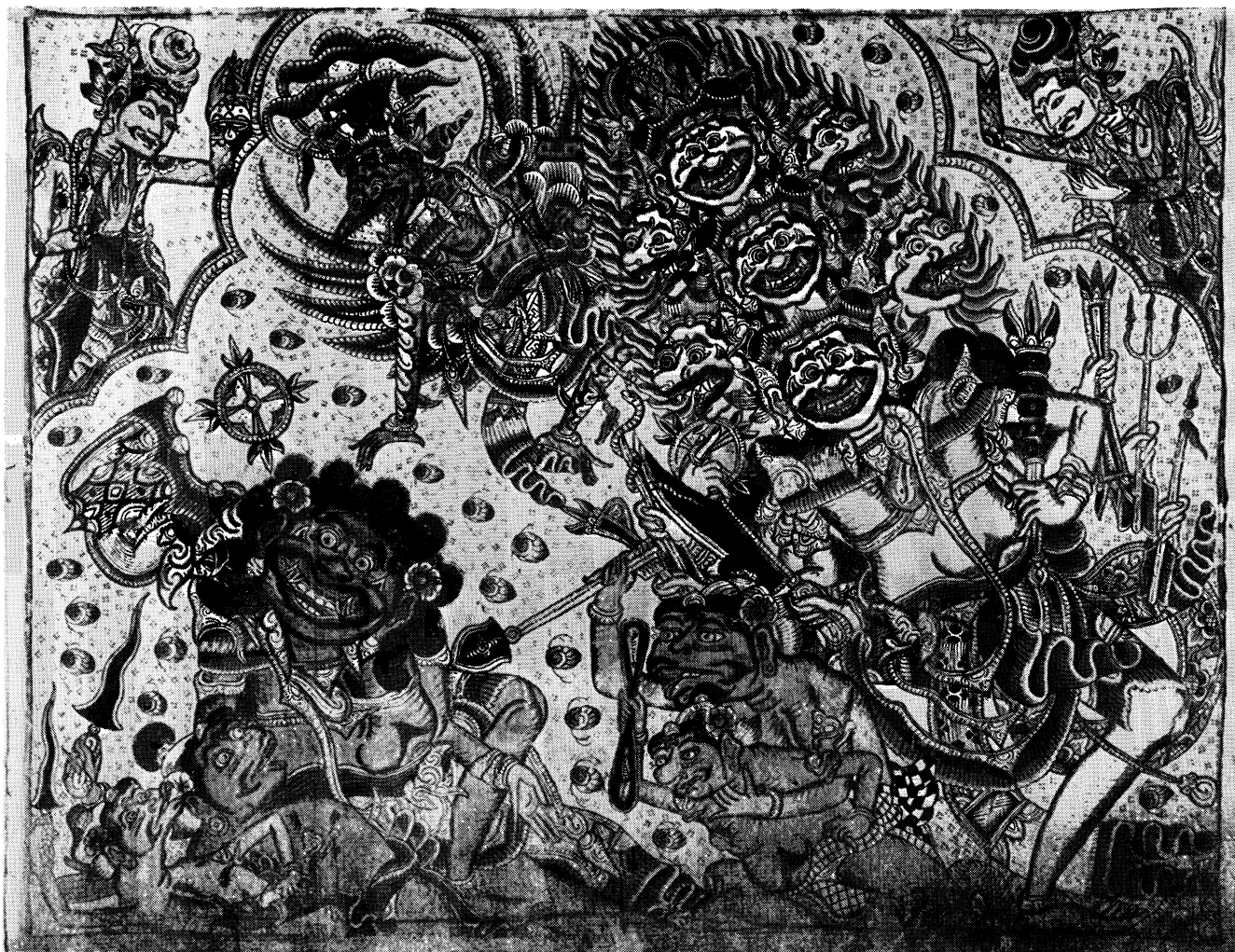
E. Bhoma Conquered by Pamurtian Wiṣṇu  
(Polychrome painting on cotton, Bali Museum)

E. This picture (No. 1994-7 in the collection of the Ethnographic Museum at Leiden, 100 x 120 cm.), in the Museum's possession for half a century and now on display in its hall, depicts the same episode as D. The decisive character of the fight is explained by Garuda's flying off with the Wijaya-mālā. The painting is large enough for six

16. A. Teeuw, Het Bhomakāwya, een Oudjavaansch gedicht (Groningen: Wolters, 1946).



heavenly seers to be included instead of the single figure in D, though the usual number in the texts is either five or seven. Other additions are "clowns," *pendasar* (base figures), demons (*bhūta*), and, at the extreme left, an unidentified warrior with pointing dagger (*patrem*). The aftermath of the battle, Bhūmi's wailing over the corpse of her son Bhoma, is here placed to the right rather than to the left as in D.



F. Bhoma Conquered by Pamurtian Wiṣṇu  
(Drawing on cotton, Leiden Museum)

F. In September 1970 the Ethnographic Museum at Leiden came into possession of this very clear drawing on cotton, measuring 100 x 130 cm. While the main figure at the left closely resembles the Bhoma of D and E, it is the figure of Garuda which enables one to identify this scene positively with that of D and E. In this light, the witnesses top left and right, holding priest's bells (*ghaṇṭā*) in their left hands, present no difficulties of interpretation. From E we are already accustomed to *bhūta* and *pendasar* at the feet of Bhoma and the pamurtian.





G. Subject Unknown  
(Polychrome drawing on cotton, Rotterdam Museum)

G. This picture (No. 58420 in the Rotterdam Museum collection, 150 x 164 cm.) depicts an episode in which two similarly equipped pamurtian are being besought not to engage in disastrous battle.

Our knowledge of Java and Bali is extremely limited, not so much for want of materials<sup>17</sup> as because of the paucity of scholars to work on them. The Javanese brahala is evidently no match for the Balinese pamurtian; on the other hand, the *kakawin* form the heritage of Old Java. Perhaps the Javanese were stronger in the literary field and the Balinese in the pictorial. The question may be difficult to answer, but for the present it seemed worthwhile nonetheless to show the hitherto neglected pamurtian, brahala, and kepuh to a wider audience.

17. In 1970 Dr. Th. Pigeaud completed the third volume of his Literature of Java: Catalogue Raisonné of Javanese Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Leiden and other Public Collections in the Netherlands (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967-70). Not even one percent of the manuscripts described in this collection has been made accessible in print, not to mention in a critical edition.